

1868 and through these many years has provided a sound and enduring beacon light for the people of North Carolina. It has meant that the people of our State were interested in education for the children of this State, throughout the length and breadth of the State. It has kept before us a high ideal, a worthy objective, and a practical guide. It has meant that the General Assembly would take appropriate action to promote and encourage education in all corners of the State, in all sections, and in all places. Historically, this constitutional provision has not been interpreted to mean that as a physical fact every locality in the State should have exactly the same public school facilities and exactly the same level of achievement. This has not been the case because historically the support and maintenance of our public schools began with the localities themselves. However, the mandate which has been constant on the General Assembly has been that educational opportunity and authority would, under law, be available to all localities and counties throughout the State.

The written report of the Constitutional Commission in its explanation of the suggested deletion of this requirement states that the phrase should be removed "as a possible source of conflict with the local option provisions" which were adopted in 1956.

Since the release of this report the Attorney General has advised that there is no overriding legal reason for deleting the "general and uniform" provision. Based upon this view of the legal question, the Chairman of the Constitutional Study Commission has also stated that he believes all or most of the individual members of the Commission would prefer not to delete this language in the absence of compelling legal reason to do so. I have previously made public my own position on this matter, and simply reiterate that in my view the provision for "general and uniform system of public schools" should be retained in our Constitution.

ARTICLE IV—JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT

In my opinion, the most important aspect of constitutional revision concerns the judicial branch of our government and the vital need for improvement in the administration of justice.

As you know, I am not a lawyer, but from the beginning of my service as Governor of the State I have had a great interest in our courts and in all aspects of the administration of justice. As Governor, I have constantly been impressed with the great importance of the judicial branch of our government. The operation of our courts, the actions of our judges, solicitors, and all other officers directly connected with our courts have a daily impact on the citizens of North Carolina, in every community of the State.

In speaking to the North Carolina Bar Association Annual Convention at Asheville in 1955, I expressed to them my conviction that the lawyers of North Carolina should take the lead in making a thorough and objective study of our courts, and based upon their findings, then take the lead to show our State what should be done to improve the administration of justice in North Carolina.